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LEGAL NEWS YOU CAN USE

Back To School Readiness:
The Why, When and How of Real Co-parenting

So you and your child have picked out a backpack and filled it with school supplies, but are you really ready for a great new school year? If you are co-parenting a child or children with one or more other parents, now is a great time to go over your child's schedule, and determine what (if any) activities your child desires to participate in, and how (or if) you will be able to handle the demands that these activities will place on you.



Why: Studies show that the best way to secure the "other parent's" financial participation in the child's dreams -- whether it is a few new books to encourage your child's goal of becoming "Reader of the Month" or consistent participation in a college fund -- is to engage the other parent in the child's life from the earliest point possible.

When: Long before school starts is the ideal time to figure out what your child desires, and engage the other parent in the process of what is going to work for your blended family. This will give both parents -- or even step parents in some circumstances -- the time to consider and adjust to this new situation.

How: So how do you get past the stress of interacting with your ex to redefine the relationship into the kind of co-parenting that will truly benefit your kid(s)? If the concept is new to both of you, plan to broach the topic as far in advance as possible to give the other parent time to adjust to the new idea(s).

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Summer 2014

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## ....continued from page 1 **Back To School Readiness:...**

Keeping a shared calendar on your smart phones may cut down on lapses and keep everyone apprised of schedule changes.

**Added Benefits:** Parents consistently report that they learn most about what is going on for their kids' lives when they are *en route* to some place or another – especially when children's activities are crowding out the ritual of the family dinner table! Doing it all alone is bad for your blood pressure and potentially deprives your kids of the added resources and important relationship they need for success. When the juggling and hassles seems impossible, remember that this season in your child's life is short, but his or her memories of you both putting aside your differences to be there will last forever.

## Is Your Virginia Child Support Award Fair?

(Calculations Under NEWLY AMENDED Virginia Child Support Guidelines)

Children need to be supported by their parents. So simple, but so easily forgotten in the course of a break up! As you each begin separate lives, your own needs seem so much more expensive than they seemed when you were together. And the numerous ways in which you supported your children without protest during the relationship are now reduced to an obligation to send a specified monetary amount to the other parent! We have found that it helps if parents understand how child support is calculated by the Court when they are facing a child support hearing.



The Virginia Child Support Guidelines – which have been amended effective July 1, 2014 -- are designed to apportion the income from all sources of both parents to assure that the child or children's needs are being met. Although every child is different and family circumstances vary widely, there are basic needs – such as the need for a roof over their heads and to be fed and clothed – that exist for all children. There are also some needs that some children have, but that other children do not – such as the expense of a child care provider so a parent or parents can go to work, or an expense for health or dental insurance or unreimbursed medical or dental expenses. Similarly, some families have other children besides those that are the subject of the child support petition, while other families do not, or may have one or more children of this relationship living in each parent's home. Some children have special needs that are extraordinary, and some parents have visitation expenses that are extraordinary. The Virginia Child Support Guidelines are designed to consider these recurring issues, as well as any special issues that a family may be experiencing to assure that all of the children in the Commonwealth are fairly supported. Since there are so many varying families and issues, calculating child support under the Virginia Child Support Guidelines can be complicated, and obtaining an award of child support that fairly considers all of the pertinent issues for your family may require experience, patience, and diligence.

The Virginia Child Support Guidelines first consider the gross income from all sources of both parents, and then deduct from this amount for each parent any amount of support that either parent may be paying for the support of children from another relationship. This assures that all of each parent's children will be fairly supported according to the means of that parent. From the remaining joint income, a basic award of support is determined and apportioned between the parents according to their share of the remaining combined income, and according to their share of the child's time that they have committed to care for the child. The parenting time share is important to the calculation of child support because the parent taking care of the child will be responsible to feed and clothe the child, as well as provide appropriate housing, during his or her parenting time. If the child spends most of his or her time in the home of one parent, the parent in whose home the child resides primarily will need to allot a greater share of their income to provide food, clothing, entertainment, furnishings, etc. for the child than will the other parent. Line items for health and dental insurance fairly attributed to the child, and child care expenses necessary for the parent incurring the expense to work are separately added to the basic support number and apportioned between the parent because not all families incur these expenses. Special circumstances require a Court ordered deviation from the Virginia Child Support Guidelines, and the Court must be persuaded of the validity of the proposed deviation.

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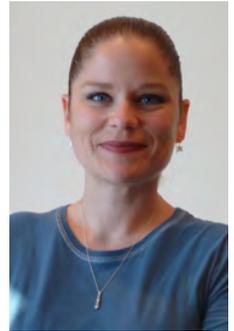


## ....continued from page 2 Is Your Virginia Child....

Virginia Child Support Guidelines have changed effective July 1, 2014, and these changes may affect the child support award for your child. For example, when child support is calculated under the amended guidelines, the "custodial parent" no longer is obligated to pay the first \$250 of unreimbursed medical expenses. Similarly, the income brackets have changed such that the support awards may increase or decrease even when no other circumstance has changed. Consider whether the child support award for your child should be revisited under the Amended Guidelines to be sure that your child support award is fair. The Law Office of Lori A. Michaud PC will make sure your case gets the attention it requires to achieve a fair child support award.

## New Addition!

We are pleased to announce that [Shaunda Larsen](#) will be joining us as paralegal. Shaunda joins us with a wealth of experience working in the legal field. She started her career as a legal assistant in 2008 at Penn Stuart and Eskridge in Southwest Virginia, where she assisted with primarily commercial litigation issues. After moving to the Tidewater area, Shaunda began working as a paralegal at Waldo & Lyle PC in Norfolk. In 2011 she accepted a position at Stallings & Bischoff PC working, predominantly on domestic relations issues. In June of 2012, she followed the partner with whom she worked from Stallings and Bischoff PC to a sole proprietorship, to continuing lending her support on domestic relations issues, as well as criminal defense issues. Appreciating the flexibility and excellent service that a solo practice is so well suited to provide, Shaunda brings her extensive knowledge and thorough training to the Law Office of Lori A. Michaud, PC. Her experience in supporting counsel and clients in issues of domestic relations and criminal defense law, as well as her energetic, upbeat personality, will help to ensure that our clients continue to have a positive, personal experience while we address their legal issues.



## Counseling During the Divorce Process – It's a Family Affair

Going through a divorce is a stressful and emotional time. A [divorce](#) affects not only the separating partners, but also children and stepchildren. While adults are caught up in practical tasks like dividing possessions and separating residences, children may be bewildered by the tremendous upheaval in their lives and routines. They are likely to experience emotional stress and feelings of anger, disappointment, guilt, anxiety and sadness. There are many kinds of counseling, and you and your spouse may not be the only family members that will benefit from some counseling.

**Separation Counseling** -- Divorce and separation counseling can help each of the marital partners separate marital issues "moving forward" issues and the process of resolving those issues in the steps and stages necessary for the parties and their family.

**Individual Therapy** – Working with a counselor individually can add a sense of perspective and objectivity to the overwhelming emotions of a break up. Marital partners can learn more about themselves as individuals, and begin to view the divorce as an opportunity for personal development and growth.

**Co-parenting Therapy** – Counseling both parents together fosters healthy and constructive discussions on important, joint decisions such as how to structure parental responsibilities and redefine each parent's role so that these responsibilities can be accomplished with minimal hostility, and hopefully a restored sense of enjoyment as parents become better prepared to meet their child's changing needs with less conflict.



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## ....continued from page 3 **Counseling During the....**

**Counseling for Children** -- Children may feel many of the same emotions as their separating parents. They are also confused because their world is changing, and may feel that they are to blame. Children may need more patience and reassurance than usual and typically need as much stability and routine as possible during this transition.

Professional counseling specifically for children involved in a divorce can help children identify and process their emotions and develop healthy ways to move forward constructively. Providing counseling during the divorce process may prevent emotional problems for your children later in life. Therapy is available for children individually or in a family setting.

### Take Action

- Discuss with your child's other parent your feelings on separation counseling for you and any children.
- Select a therapist experienced in separation counseling. This is different from marriage counseling, where the emphasis is on "fixing" a relationship.
- Determine whether individual or co-parenting therapy would be beneficial in your situation.
- With the therapist, discuss how you will handle counseling for the children, whether individual or as a family.

You can find counselors with the right experience at the [American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy \(AAMFT\) website](#). The [Center for Divorce Education](#) has tips for divorcing parents and links to other valuable information.

## Divorce Recovery: Build and Keep Your Support System

When the divorce papers are signed, property split up and children's needs addressed, there's still a job to do – build a divorce recovery support system. Get connected and stay connected with those who really help – not harm – your emotional life.



**Professional Counseling** - You may have turned to a therapist during your divorce for help with stress and emotional issues. That person is still available to you post-divorce. Talking out your feelings with a professional can help you release baggage from your prior marriage and concentrate on your new life.

**Family** - Family members can be great support, but may be conflicted because of their own relationships with your former spouse. Keep communication lines open, and stress that they are valuable to you not only for your own support, but also that of your children.

**Friends** - Sometimes friendships end along with the divorce. This may be because the friendship was formed around "couples only" activities that you and your spouse used to enjoy with them. Some friends may feel that their loyalties challenged by your break up, and others may fear that their own marriages will be weakened by continuing a relationship with you now that you are single.

**Help Groups** -- Community and church-based groups can offer camaraderie, support and empathy. Divorce recovery groups are available in many areas. You can locate one near you at [DivorceCare.org](#).

The key is to save those relationships that you value and that continue to "work" while at the same time creating new ones. Stick with friends who are loyal and have always been there for you. Seek out new friends through interests you enjoy, such as hobbies, physical activities, and volunteerism.

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## ....continued from page 4 **Divorce Recovery: Build....**

If you are involved in a divorce, child custody domestic violence or DUI issue, it's important to get an attorney experienced in these types of cases involved immediately. Call 757-395-4017 for your initial free consultation. The Law Office of Lori A. Michaud, P.C., [family law attorney in Virginia](#), can help you get the best outcome for your family law case.

## What's Happening in Virginia Beach

### August 5, 2014

Nine Inch Nails & Soundgarden concert  
Farm Bureau Live at Virginia Beach

### August 6, 10, 13, 30, 2014

Fireworks at the Oceanfront  
20th Street Barge, Virginia Beach

### August 7, 2014

Family Great Adventure Series  
Oceanfront, Virginia Beach

### August 8 – 10, 2014

Virginia Beach Antiques Show  
Convention Center, Virginia Beach

### August 9, 2014

Salute to American Video Sphere & Laser Show  
Boardwalk at Virginia Beach, Virginia Beach

### August 15, 2014

Town Fair at Town Center  
Town Center, Virginia Beach

### August 15 – 17, 2014

VB Tattoo Festival  
Convention Center, Virginia Beach

### August 20, 2014

Motley Crue & Alice Cooper concert  
Farm Bureau Live at Virginia Beach

### August 22 – 23, 2014

Funkfest  
Oceanfront, Virginia Beach

### August 29 – 31, 2014

American Music Festival  
5th Street Main Stage, Virginia Beach

### August 31, 2014

Rock 'n' Roll ½ Marathon  
Convention Center, Virginia Beach

### Sept. 5 – 6, 2014

Blues at the Beach festival  
17th Street Park, Virginia Beach

### Sept. 6 – 7, 2014

Neptune's Fall Wine Festival  
Neptune's Park, Virginia Beach

### Sept. 7, 2014

Jason Aldean, Florida Georgia Line &  
Tyler Farr concert  
Farm Bureau Live at Virginia Beach

### Sept. 12 – 14, 2014

Mediterranean Weekend fest  
Town Center, Virginia Beach

### Sept. 18, 2014

Brad Paisley, Leah Turner & Charlie Worsham  
concert  
Farm Bureau Live at Virginia Beach

### Sept. 19, 2014

Town Fair at Town Center  
Town Center, Virginia Beach

### Sept. 26 – Oct. 5, 2014

International Sandsculpting Championship  
4th – 10th Street Oceanfront, Virginia Beach

### Oct. 2, 2014

Virginia Beach Gospel Music Festival  
Sandler Center for the Performing Arts, Virginia  
Beach

### Oct 4 – 5, 2014

Biplanes & Triplanes Air Show  
Military Aviation Museum, Virginia Beach

### Oct. 18, 2014

Fall Fashion Weekend  
Town Center, Virginia Beach,

### Oct. 18 – 19, 2014

Craft Beer Festival  
24th Street Park, Virginia Beach

### Oct. 25, 2014

Blue Moon Wicked 10k  
Convention Center, Virginia Beach

### Oct. 25, 2014

Town and Treat  
Town Center, Virginia Beach